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The Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa : empire building and Atlantic system (1580-1674)

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Citation

Ribeiro da Silva, F. I. (2009, June 24). *The Dutch and the Portuguese in West Africa : empire building and Atlantic system (1580-1674)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13867>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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INTRODUCTION

More than 50 years have passed since Charles R. Boxer wrote his major works on the Dutch-Portuguese rivalries in the Atlantic. In *Salvador de Sá and the struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1682*¹ and *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654*² the author examined in detail the struggle between these two European sea powers for the control of the abovementioned possessions and Atlantic trade in general.

The works of Boxer, elaborated in the context of the colonial and imperial historiography of the time, focus more on the formal aspects of the historical process, such as military encounters and naval power, and pay less attention to the informal elements, such as the politics, social dynamics and private interests affecting the interactions between the Dutch and the Portuguese and within their empires. In brief, Boxer attributes the successful takeover of the North-eastern Brazilian captaincies, Angola, São Tomé and other forts on the Gold Coast by the WIC to the superior naval power of the Dutch and puts the reoccupation of the Brazil and Angola by the Portuguese down as a stroke of good luck.³ However, other elements need to be taken into account in the analysis of these events.

Boxer's comparative analysis was not followed up by many other authors. Pieter Emmer was one of the few historians who continued to use Boxer's comparative approach, but challenged the idea that the Dutch intervention in the Atlantic had much of an impact on the Portuguese and the Spanish Empires, as Boxer had claimed.⁴ A limited number of

¹ C. R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sá and the struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1682* (London: Athlone Press, 1952).

² C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

³ After this study Boxer dedicated three other books to the study of the Dutch and the Portuguese Overseas Expansion in general and two other studies to Portuguese colonial societies, race relations and the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Iberian expansion. C. R. Boxer, *Four centuries of Portuguese expansion, 1415-1825: a succinct survey* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1961); *idem*, *The Dutch seaborne empire, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1965); *idem*, *The Portuguese seaborne empire, 1415-1825* (London: Hutchinson, 1969); *idem*, *Portuguese society in the tropics: the municipal councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia, and Luanda, 1510-1800* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965); *idem*, *Race relations in the Portuguese colonial empire, 1415-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); *idem*, *The Church Militant and the Iberian Expansion, 1440-1770* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

⁴ See for example: P. C. Emmer, 'The First Global War: The Dutch versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590-1609', *e-JPH*, 1 (Summer, 2003); *idem*, 'The Struggle over sugar. The abortive Attack of the Dutch on Portugal in the South Atlantic', *Mare Liberum*, 13 (June, 1997), pp. 57-69.

Brazilian researchers dedicated to the study of the Dutch rule over Brazil and Angola and the military encounters between the Portuguese-Brazilians and the Dutch also made an important contribution to the understanding of Dutch-Portuguese conflicts in the Atlantic.⁵ However, many aspects remain unclear. This book aims to re-examine some of the multiple subjects explored by Boxer in his studies and shed some light on key issues to explain the success and/or failure of the Dutch and the Portuguese in the Atlantic between 1580 and 1674. The choice of those factors of analysis has been made with regard to the research progress in the recently born field of Atlantic History.

In the last 50 years, Atlantic History has emerged as a new independent field of research. From a geographical point of view, Atlantic History encompasses three continents: Europe, Africa and the Americas, and the vast zone of interconnection between the three. In methodological terms, Atlantic History has been exploring the possibilities of concepts of economics, such as 'system', the techniques of network analysis and the methods of comparative history. Thematically, Atlantic History has incorporated various research topics such as demography, migration and labour studies, slave trade and the African-American Diaspora. Prosopographies of social and economic groups and their activities, such as colonial elites, mercantile communities and families have also been studied in detail. As Bailyn and Elliot have emphasized in the past years, the major characteristics of Atlantic History seem to be 'motion' and 'variation'. The Atlantic World was constantly changing and comprised multiple realities. The study of different chronological periods and distinct geographical regions reveals different 'Atlantics'.⁶

In recent years, a vast amount of research on European Atlantic Empires has been done. Most of these studies in the British Atlantic, the French Atlantic, the Dutch Atlantic

⁵ José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, *Tempo dos flamengos : influencia da ocupação holandesa na vida e na cultura do norte do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Olympio, 1947) [Dutch edn.: *Nederlanders in Brazilië (1624-1654): de invloed van de Hollandse bezetting op het leven en de cultuur in Noord-Brazilië*: (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2001) G. N. Visser (trans.); Introduction by B. N. Teensma]; Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *Olinda restaurada : guerra e açúcar no nordeste, 1630-1654* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Forense-Universitária, 1975); *idem*, *O negócio do Brasil : Portugal, os Países Baixos e o Nordeste, 1641-1669* (Rio de Janeiro: Top Books, 2003) [Dutch edn.: *De Braziliaanse affaire: Portugal, de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden en Noord-Oost Brazilië, 1641-1669*. Catherine Barel (trans.); E. van den Boogaart (ed.)] (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2005); Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul, séculos XVI e XVII* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1621 -1648) (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 1999); *idem*, *Guerras do Brasil, (1504-1654): ataques e invasões durante o Brasil-Colônia* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1992).

⁶ Bernard Bailyn, 'The Idea of Atlantic History', *Itinerario*, 20/1, (1996), pp. 19-44; 'The Nature of Atlantic History', Special Issue of *Itinerario*, 23/2 (1999), pp. 48-162; Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: concept and contours* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

and the Iberian Atlantic have made known to a broader public the institutional frameworks of each empire, as well as the political and economic strategies in the genesis of the process of empire building developed by the different European States, State-sponsored trading companies, and private entrepreneurs and businessmen involved in the process.⁷

More recently, efforts have been made to promote the comparison between Atlantic Empires. These works are, usually, comparisons of the same subject in different regions under the administration of the same political power or different European sea powers. The study of plantation economies and societies in different Imperial frameworks is a good example of this type of comparison.⁸ European participation in the transatlantic slave trade has been another important subject promoting the comparative study of European sea

⁷ For the British Atlantic see, for instance: David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800* (London, etc.: Macmillan, 2002); Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (eds.), *The creation of the British Atlantic World (Anglo-America in the transatlantic world)* (Baltimore MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2005). For the Iberian Empires see: Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); John R. Fisher, *The Economic Aspects of Spanish Imperialism in America, 1492-1810* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005); Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Empires, 1400-1668* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005). For the French Atlantic see, for example: Kenneth Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2003); Peter Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada. A Cultural History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000); James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For other European Atlantic Empires see, for example: Gunlog Fur, *Colonialism in the margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For the Dutch Atlantic in general, see: Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven, *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). For the Dutch Caribbean, Suriname, Guiana, Antilles, and Wild Coast see: Wim Klooster, *Illicit riches: Dutch trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998); Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in Surinam 1791/5-1942* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990); *idem*, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680-1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985); *idem*, *A short history of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979); *idem*, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971). For the Dutch in North America, see for instance: Joyce D. Goodfriend, Benjamin Schmidt and Annette Stott (ed.), *Going Dutch : the Dutch presence in America, 1609-2009* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Joyce D. Goodfriend (ed.), *Revisiting New Netherland : perspectives on early Dutch America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); *idem*, *Before the melting pot : society and culture in colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); *idem*, *'Too great a mixture of nations': the development of New York City society in the seventeenth century* ([S.l.: s.n.], 1975); Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence abroad: the Dutch imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Hans Mulder, Els Klok en Jaap Jacobs, *Nederland aan de Hudson: Utrechtse in New York in de 17e eeuw* (Utrecht: Universiteitsmuseum Utrecht, 2000); Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: a Dutch colony in seventeenth-century America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

⁸ See, for example: David Eltis, 'The English Plantation Americas in Comparative Perspective', *idem*, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 193-223; Russell R. Menard, 'Law, credit, supply of labour, and the organization of sugar production in the colonial Greater Caribbean: a comparison of Brazil and Barbados in the Seventeenth Century' in John J. McCusker, Kenneth Morgan (eds.), *The early modern Atlantic economy: Essays on Transatlantic Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 154-162; Bernard Moitted, *Sugar, Slavery, and Society: Perspectives on the Caribbean, India, the Mascarenes, and the United States*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

powers.⁹ Warfare has been another topic for which comparative analysis of European Atlantic Empires has been present.¹⁰ The recent work of John Elliot also reinforced the role of comparative history in the field of Atlantic History and especially in the perspective of North-South European Empires.¹¹ Nevertheless, comparative analyses of European Empires and the political and economic goals of European States, commercial companies and private initiatives for the building of their empires are few.

Therefore, our understanding of the differences and the similarities between the Atlantic Empires is still limited, as is that of the reasoning behind the different paths followed by each European Atlantic Empire. This book offers a contribution to the expansion of comparative studies in Atlantic History by examining the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic Empires in the 17th century. The central question of this study is: why did European Atlantic Empires take different shapes and follow various paths during the Early Modern Period?

The answer to this broad historical question could be given by comparing any of the Atlantic Empires. However, we consider case studies of the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic Empires to be of special interest for five reasons. Firstly, because Netherlands and Portugal were countries with an identical size and population; secondly, the Dutch Republic and Portugal were European States with distinct institutional frameworks; thirdly, their societies had different cultural and religious backgrounds; fourthly, the economy of these two countries were of a distinct character at the time of the start of their overseas enterprises;

⁹ The most important contributions have been made by Curtin, Lovejoy, Eltis, Richardson, *et al* See: Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic slave trade. A census* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Paul E. Lovejoy, 'The volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A synthesis', *The Journal of African History*, 23/4 (1982), pp. 473-501; *Idem*, 'The impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: a review of the literature', *The Journal of African History*, 30/3 (1989), pp. 365-394; David Eltis [*et al*], *The Trans-Atlantic slave trade : a database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999); David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, and David Richardson, 'National Participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade: New Evidence' in José C. Curto and Renée Soulodre-La France (eds.), *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections during the Slave Trade* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2005), pp. 13-42.

¹⁰ Several scholars have made efforts to study in comparative perspective the military and economic disputes between important sea powers in the Atlantic, especially during the seventeenth century. Geoffrey Parker has given an important contribution in this matter. See: Geoffrey Parker, *Spain and the Netherlands, 1559-1659: ten studies* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1979); P. C. Emmer, 'Los holandeses y el reto atlántico en el siglo XVII' in José Manuel Santos Pérez y George F. Cabral de Souza (eds.) *El desafío holandés al dominio ibérico en Brasil en el siglo XVII* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006), pp. 17-32; *idem*, 'The First Global War: The Dutch versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590-1609', *e-JPH*, 1 (Summer, 2003); *idem*, 'The Struggle over sugar. The abortive Attack of the Dutch on Portugal in the South Atlantic', *Mare Liberum*, 13 (June, 1997), pp. 59-67.

¹¹ John H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2006).

and fifthly, the way these two States perceived their maritime ventures both in the Atlantic and in Asia were completely different. The comparative analysis of the Dutch and the Portuguese is also of relevance given the direct competition between these two sea powers for the control of possessions, commercial branches as well as the markets of supply and consumption in the Atlantic.

This broad question will be examined by using West Africa as a case study. West Africa is usually perceived as a periphery of the Atlantic. The type of interaction between West Africa, Europe and the Americas are peripheral in the sense that West African local economies did not depend on the trade with Europe or the Americas for their survival. Most of the goods supplied were consumed by African elite groups and used in military conflicts between different African kingships. West Africa was deeply affected by the development of the Atlantic economy and societies and their participation in this process had a deep impact on African political organization, social structure and internal economies.

The Atlantic system could hardly have been set up without the slave labour force supplied by West Africa. In fact, this continent and its population helped shape the Atlantic economic system and determined the newly born Atlantic societies, on which the African element had a great impact. Africans, African authorities and Eurafrican middlemen and warriors had a central role in this process. In this sense, West Africa plays a key role in the development of the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic economies, and without studying West Africa and the participation of Africans in *The making of the Atlantic World*¹² we cannot truly understand the way in which the Atlantic World was organized initially and evolved over time.¹³ Therefore, the European posts and settlements on the West Coast of Africa and the interactions between European, Africans and Eurafricans provide the best opportunities for a comparison of European empires in the Atlantic.

¹² John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic world, 1400-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹³ The participation of West Africa 'in the making of the Atlantic World' has been claimed mainly by scholars of African History. Philip D. Curtin, Joseph C. Miller, John Thornton, George E. Brooks among other historians. See: Philip D. Curtin, *Economic change in precolonial Africa* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans, idem, Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 1999); George E., Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, social status, gender, and religious observance from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2003); Philip J. Havik, *Silences and soundbites: the gendered dynamics of trade and brokerage in the pre-colonial Guinea Bissau region* (Münster: LIT, 2004); Tobias Green, 'Masters of Difference: Creolization and the Jewish Presence in Cabo Verde, 1497-1672' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2006).

Thus, this book presents new evidence showing the central role of West Africa in the building of the Atlantic World. It covers the period between 1580 and 1674. These chronological boundaries have been carefully chosen to ensure a good balance between the history of the Dutch Republic, Portugal and their empires. 1580 corresponds to the beginning of the Habsburg rule over Portugal and its empire, and 1674 refers to the bankruptcy of the first Dutch West India Company (hereafter WIC – *West-Indische Compagnie*). In West Africa, during the period of 1580-1674 the indigenous population living in the coastal areas and the hinterland witnessed the arrival of more Europeans, such as the Dutch, the French, the English, and the Scandinavians, and the creation of their trading posts. Their establishment on the African coast and their commercial activities with the Africans and in the Atlantic inter-continental trade were a turning point in the relationship between various West African regions and in the connection of this continent with the Atlantic world in general.

Taking into account the reasons enumerated earlier, we essentially rephrase our general question as: ‘Did the Dutch and the Portuguese have two models of empire building/colonization and two distinct economic strategies?’ This question will be tackled thematically, by examining topics such as institutions, labour migration, colonial societies, coastal and long-distance trade, private entrepreneurship, networks and cross-cultural interactions. By doing so, this book contributes to the main research subjects in the field of Atlantic History.

1. Institutions

Institutions have generally been overlooked by the scholarship on empire building.¹⁴ For the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic, Boxer and Ratelband were two of the few scholars to emphasize the key role of the institutions and their functioning problems on the shaping of these empires throughout the 17th century.¹⁵

¹⁴ A. J. R. Russell-Wood (ed.), *Government and governance of European Empires* (2 vols., Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 2000); *idem* (ed.), *Local governments in European Overseas Empires, 1450-1800* (2 vols., Aldershot: Ashgate/Variorum, 1999).

¹⁵ Klaas Ratelband, *Os Holandeses no Brasil e na Costa Africana. Angola, Kongo e São Tomé (1600-1650)* (Lisboa: Vega, 2003), [Dutch edn., *Nederlanders in West-Afrika (1600-1650): Angola, Kongo en São Tomé* (Zutphen: Walburg Press,

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The institutions implemented in the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic Empires were transferred from the Dutch Republic and Portugal and, therefore, followed the institutional models in use. However, once established overseas, these institutions acquired new shapes and many problems arose. Institutions were established overseas to attain certain goals. However, these two empires were formed by several empire-builders, namely the State, the corporate organizations (i.e. the State-sponsored commercial companies), private traders and settlers. These groups had different interests and, whether in Europe or overseas, they used these institutions to achieve their purposes. Hence, the study of institutions and their functioning problems may help us to understand how the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic Empires were built and how they evolved over time. Institutions may also help to explain success and failure in these two empires. Analysis of institutions may even provide some aid identifying the different empire-builders, their aims and their strategies for attaining their goals, as well as the conflicts of interest between them and their impact on the building of the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic.

The Dutch and the Portuguese aims for their Atlantic Empires were not very different. In both cases, the main goals were to trade and to guarantee military protection for their commerce. Guaranteeing an efficient government of the settlements and providing juridical aid to the people living in their Atlantic territories were two other main objectives. Over time, taxing the trade conducted by private merchants within their monopoly areas would also become an important purpose. Despite having similar goals, different options were implemented. These differences were determined by the institutional realities in the Republic and Portugal, by changes in these institutional frameworks in the lands of origin, by shifts in the general policy concerning the overseas areas, and by the circumstances of settlement in the different Atlantic territories.

2000)]; C. R. Boxer, *Portuguese society in the tropics: the municipal councils of Goa, Macau, Bahia and Luanda, 1510-1800* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965)

2. Labour Migration and colonial societies

Labour migration and its contribution to the building of the Atlantic Empires has received much attention from historians in the last decades. However, this scholarship has focused mainly on free and coerced migration of Africans and Europeans to the Americas during the Early Modern Period, with a special focus on the 18th and early 19th centuries.¹⁶ Little attention has been paid to the European migration to West Africa and the role of free Africans and slaves as a workforce in the European posts and settlements on this continent.¹⁷ The study of labour migration to West Africa and the local recruitment of workers is essential: i) to identify the different people involved in the process of empire building; ii) to examine the numerical proportion and balance of power between the various groups; and iii) to analyse the type of role played by these labour migrants. These three

¹⁶ Wim Klooster and Alfred Padula (eds.), *The Atlantic World: Essays on slavery, migration and imagination* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005); Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Herbert S. Klein, 'The Atlantic slave trade to 1650' in Stuart B. Schwartz (ed.), *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 201-236; David Eltis (ed.), *Coerced and free migration: global perspectives* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2002); Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Patrick Manning (ed.), *Slave trades, 1500-1800: globalization of forced labour* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1996); Robert Charles Anderson, *The Great Migration Begins: Emigrants to New England, 1620-1633*, 3 vols. (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1995); Nicholas Canny (ed.), *Europeans on the Move. Studies on European migration, 1500-1800* (Oxford/New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994); Ida Altman and James Horn (eds.), *'To make America': European emigration in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); David J. Robinson (ed.), *Migration in colonial Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An introduction* (New York: Knopf, 1986); P. C. Emmer (ed.), *Colonialism and migration; Indentured labour before and after slavery* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1986); David Eltis, 'Free and coerced transatlantic migrations: some comparisons', *American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), pp. 251-281; Paul E. Lovejoy, 'The volume of the Atlantic slave trade: a synthesis', *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982), pp. 473-501; David W. Galenson, *White servitude in America: An economic analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); A. E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White servitude and convict labor in America, 1607-1776* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1965); Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic slave trade. A census* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

¹⁷ Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and imperialism before the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); *idem*, 'The end of the 'white man's grave'? Nineteenth-century mortality in West Africa', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 21/1 (Summer 1990), pp. 63-88; *idem*, *Death by migration: Europe's encounter with the tropical world in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); K. G. Davies, 'The living and the dead: white mortality in West Africa, 1684-1732' in Stanley L. Engerman and Eugene D. Genovese (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative studies* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 83-98; Harvey M. Feinberg, 'New data on European mortality in West Africa: The Dutch on the Gold Coast, 1719-1760', *The Journal of African History*, 15/3 (1974), pp. 375-371; Philip D. Curtin, 'The white man's grave': Image and reality, 1780-1850', *The Journal of British Studies*, 1/1 (Nov., 1961), pp. 94-110.

aspects are crucial to realizing who the empire-builders were, how empires were built, and how they functioned.

Labour migration was a determinant factor in the formation of Atlantic colonial societies. European colonial societies have received great attention from historians in the last decades. However, most of the existing studies focus on the formation of plantation societies in Brazil, Spanish America, the Caribbean and North America. Little interest has been shown in the emergence of colonial societies and micro-societies in the European settlements in West Africa.¹⁸ The current research analyses the social composition of colonial societies, the living conditions of different groups and the conflicts of interest between different social actors. Notwithstanding, the relationship between social groups and economic development is often neglected.

Therefore, this research aims to present a comparative view of the societies developed by the Dutch and the Portuguese in their West African territories and to debate the role played by each social group in the economic growth of the posts and settlements as well as in the building of the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic Empires.

3. Intra- and Inter-continental trade in, to and via West Africa

Numerous works have been devoted to the study of the intra-continental trade in West Africa. Scholars such as Brooks, Kea, Curtin and many others have examined in detail the coastal commerce conducted in different areas of the continent by Africans, Eurafricans and Europeans.¹⁹ However, most of these works have focused on the impact of the opening of

¹⁸ George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*; Jean Boulegue, *Les Luso-Africains de Ségambie: XVIe – XIXe siècles* (Lisboa: Ministério da Educação: Université de Paris I 1989); Harvey M. Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans*; George E. Brooks, *Luso-African commerce and settlement in the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau regions* (Brookline, Mass.: African Studies Center, Boston University, 1980); C. R. Boxer, *Portuguese society in the tropics: the municipal councils of Goa, Macao, Bahia, and Luanda, 1510-1800* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965).

¹⁹ George E. Brooks, 'Historical perspectives on the Guinea-Bissau region, fifteenth to nineteenth centuries' in Carlos Lopes (dir.), *Mansas, Escravos, Grumetes e Gentio: Cacheu na encruzilhada de civilizações* (Lisboa: Guiné-Bissau/Lisboa: Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa, Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1993), pp. 25-54; *idem*, *Landlords and strangers: ecology, society, and trade in Western Africa (1000-1630)* (Oxford: 1993); *idem*, *Luso-African commerce and settlement in the Gambia and the Guinea-Bissau region* (Boston: African Studies Center, 1980); Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in precolonial Africa* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); K. Y. Daaku, *Trade and politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720: a study of the African reaction to European trade* (London: Clarendon Press 1970); R. A. Kea, *Settlements, trade and policies in the seventeenth-century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1982); Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1750. The impact of the Atlantic Slave trade on an African society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); *idem*, 'Trade and politics behind the Slave Coast: The

the Atlantic trade on specific regions of Africa and have often lacked a general overview of the commerce along the West African Coast. The historiography on the West African intra-continental has failed to compare the penetration of Europeans and their mixed-race offspring from inter-racial unions into the intra-continental trade, with the exception of the studies by Brooks, Boulegue and Havik on the Eurafricans.²⁰

The coordination between the African hinterland, the coastal trade and the inter-continental commerce has also been disregarded, with the exception of Kea's latest article, which has placed the West African trade in a global perspective.²¹ The relationship between intra- and inter-continental trades should have been included in the historical debate about the Atlantic Empires, their formation and *modus operandi*, but the long-distance trade has been always the prime focus. Nevertheless, the study of the inter- and intra-continental trade should not be split, since the latter was essential for the success of the former. In fact, the internal trade in West Africa was crucial for the long-distance trade conducted by the Europeans between this continent, the Americas and Europe. Over time, the coastal commerce also became fundamental for the survival of the European posts and settlements in West Africa.

To partly fill this void in the debate, this study will look in detail at the Dutch and the Portuguese intra-continental trade. We seek to show the role of the coastal trade on the success of the long-distance routes and on the survival of the Dutch and the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa.

With regard to the Atlantic inter-continental trade, the success of the Dutch between c.1590 and 1674 is usually attributed to: i) the Republic decentralized internal political structure; ii) the position of the Rebellious provinces in the international politics (especially regarding the conflicts with the Habsburgs); iii) the superior Dutch commercial management skills; iv) the higher shipping capacity and naval power of the Dutch merchant and war

Lagoon traffic and the rise of Lagos, 1500-1800', *The Journal of African History*, 24/3 (1983), pp. 321-348; Alan F. C. Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans 1485-1897* (London: Longman, 1969); *idem*, 'Dutch trade on the Nigerian coast during the seventeenth century', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 3 (1965), pp. 195-210; Jan Vansina, 'Long-distance trade routes in West Africa', *The Journal of African History*, 3/3 (1962), pp. 375-390.

²⁰ George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*; Jean Boulegue, *Les Luso-Africains de Ségambie: XVIe – XIXe siècles* (Lisboa: Ministério da Educação: Université de Paris I 1989); Philip J. Havik, *Silences and soundbites: the gendered dynamics of trade and brokerage in the pre-colonial Guinea Bissau region* (Münster: LIT, 2004).

²¹ R. A. Kea, 'Commerce and Exchange: captaincies and trading companies on the seventeenth century Gold Coast', unpublished paper presented at the *ALL-UC Economic History and ALL-UC-World History Groups of Research Conference: November 3-5, 2006, University of California, San Diego*, Panel: 'Middlemen and networks: economic, social and cultural foundations of the global economy'.

fleets.²² The collapse of the Portuguese, on the other hand, is usually seen in the historiography as a consequence of i) the global war between the Dutch Republic, Portugal and Spain; ii) the limited military resources at the disposal of the Portuguese Crown; and iii) mismanagement in general.²³

This study re-examines in detail the struggle between the Dutch and the Portuguese for the control of the inter-continental trade via West Africa in the period of 1580s-1670s, taking into consideration the political events, economic embargoes, warfare and diplomacy affecting the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic economies. In addition, we seek to build a bridge between the coastal and the long-distance trades by emphasising the importance of the access and control over markets of supply and consumption for the commercial success of the State-sponsored companies as well as that of private initiatives, which operated within the framework of the State's monopolies.

4. Entrepreneurs, businessmen and agents

Private entrepreneurship and its role in the making of the Atlantic has emerged as an important research area in the field of Atlantic History in the last two decades. This type of study examines in detail the merchant groups operating in the Atlantic, their economic activities and their commercial and financial networks. The economic strategies of the private businessmen operating in the Atlantic to either cope with the competition or promote cooperation with other merchants groups are also analysed. Some of the literature also deals with cross-cultural interactions. However, private entrepreneurship and cross-

²² P. C. Emmer, 'The first Global War: The Dutch versus Iberia in Asia, Africa and the New World, 1590-1609', *e-JPH*, 1 (Summer, 2003), pp. 3-4; *idem*, 'The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800: Expansion without Empire', *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas*, 38 (2001), pp. 35-36; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The first modern economy: Success, failure and perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), pp. 140-144; Victor Enthoven, *Zeeland and the opkomst van de Republiek. Handel en strijd in de Scheldedelta, c. 1550-1621* (Leiden: s.n., 1996), p. 95; C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (New York: Knopf, 1965).

²³ Stuart B. Schwartz, 'The economy of the Portuguese Empire' in Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto, *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), pp. 30-34; Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1984), 4 vols.; C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp. 106-120.

cultural trade are usually examined separately from the imperial entities. Furthermore, private entrepreneurship across the borders of the European Empires is usually disregarded.²⁴

Traditionally, the Dutch and the Portuguese trade in the Atlantic are associated with the monopolies of the WIC and the Portuguese Crown. However, private entrepreneurship was vital for the functioning of both the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic economies.

The inter- and intra-continental trade to, via and in West Africa demanded high investments in insurance, freight, purchase of cargoes and payment of seamen and commercial agents, etc. The articulation of the coastal and long-distance circuits required extensive commercial expertise and wide trading networks covering several geographical areas. The success of the business depended on complex commercial and financial networks connecting different key places. These factors stimulated cross-cultural interactions on an international and local level and trans-imperial financial and commercial networks.

The European entrepreneurs and businessmen in the Republic and Portugal as well as their agents overseas were the basis of this complex system of interactions. For the past 20 years, several scholars have studied these mercantile groups.²⁵ Nevertheless, little attention

²⁴ Peter A. Coclanis (ed.), *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century: Organization, Operation, Practice and Personnel* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (eds.), *The early modern Atlantic economy: Essays on Transatlantic Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Diogo Ramada Curto and Anthony Molho (eds.), *Commercial Networks in the Early Modern World* (Firenze: European University Institute, 2002) (EUI Working Paper HEC No. 2002/2).

²⁵ On the mercantile groups in the Republic, see: Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period: the economic relationship between Amsterdam and Lisbon, 1640-1705* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2004); C. Lesger, *Handel in Amsterdam ten tijde van de Opstand: kooplieden, commerciële expansie en verandering in de ruimtelijke economie van de Nederlanden ca. 1550 – ca. 1630* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001); Oscar Gelderbloem, *Zuid-Nederlandse kooplieden en de opkomst van de Amsterdamse stapelmarkt (1578-160)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000); C. Lesger & L. Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times: merchants and industrialists within the orbit of the Dutch Staple market* (Den Haag: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1995); P. W. Klein, *De Trippen in de 17e eeuw: een studie over het ondernemersgedrag op de Hollandse stapelmarkt* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1965).

On the Portuguese Sephardim in the Republic, Western Europe and the Atlantic in general, see: Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A nation upon the Ocean Sea. Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the crises of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Cátia Antunes, *Globalisation in the Early Modern Period*; Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, 'La 'nation' portugaise. Réseaux marchands dans l'espace atlantique à la époque moderne', *Annales HSS*, 58/3 (2003), pp. 627-648; Jonathan I. Israel, *Diasporas within the Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews, and the world maritime empires (1540-1740)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Paolo Bernardini & Norman Fiering (eds.), *The Jews and the expansion of Europe to the West, 1450-1800* (New York: Berghahn, 2001); Y. Kaplan, *An alternative to modernity. The Sephardi Diaspora in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Daniel M. Swetschinski, *Reluctant Cosmopolitans. The Portuguese Jews of 17th-century Amsterdam* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilisation 2000); Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of mercantilism, 1550-1750* (London: Clarendon, 1998); O. Vlessing, 'The Portuguese Jewish merchant community in 17th-century Amsterdam' in C. Lesger & L. Noordegraaf (eds.), *Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Early Modern Times*, pp. 223-243; Daniel Swetschinski & L. Schönduive, *De familie Lopes Suasso. Financiers van Willem III. The Lopes Suasso family, bankers to Willem III* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1988); Daniel M. Swetschinski, 'Kinship and commerce. The foundation of Portuguese Jewish life in 17th-century Holland', *Studia Rosenthaliana*, 15/1 (1981), pp. 52-74; *idem*, *The Portuguese Jewish merchants of the seventeenth-century Amsterdam. A social profile* (unpublished PhD Diss., Brandeis University, 1980).

has been paid to the economic activities of these private investors in the early Atlantic trade in general, and in West Africa in particular.

Here, we will also analyse the interests of the States General and the Portuguese Crown, the WIC and the private businessmen from the Dutch Republic and Portugal in a comparative perspective. We will also examine the conflicts of interest between these entities and their impact on the formation of the Atlantic Empires. Matters such as cross-cultural transactions involving Dutch, Sephardim and Portuguese merchants and trans-imperial networks encompassing the Dutch and the Iberian Atlantic are also explored in this study.

5. Source Material

In order to achieve the abovementioned aims, a careful investigation of various primary sources has been undertaken. The source material consulted for this study can be divided into four main categories: the sources left by the States, the sources left by the State-sponsored companies, the sources left by the local governments in the posts and settlements in West Africa and the sources left by private entrepreneurs. Each of these types of source material gives us a different perspective on the various subjects under analysis and their comparative analysis contribute to a better understanding of the interactions between Europe and the different Atlantic areas.

The sources left by the Portuguese Crown and the States General give us the perspective of the State. On the one hand, these materials reveal the policies of the

On the mercantile group in Portugal and the Portuguese Empire, see: Leonor Freire Costa, 'Elite mercantile na Restauração: Para uma releitura' in Nuno Gonçalo F. Monteiro, Pedro Cardim, Mafalda Soares da Cunha (orgs.), *Óptima Pars: Elites Ibero-Americanas do Antigo Regime* (Lisboa: Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa, 2005), pp. 99-132; *idem*, 'Merchant groups in the 17th century Brazilian sugar trade: Reappraising old topics with new research insights', *e-JPH*, 2/1 (Summer 2004); *idem*, *Impérios e grupos mercantis. Entre o Oriente e o Atlântico (século XVII)* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2002); *idem*, *O transporte no Atlântico e a Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil (1580-1663)*, 2 vols. (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2002); *idem*, 'A Rota do Cabo e as rotas do Brasil: Para um estudo comparado do transporte marítimo nos séculos XVI e XVII', Paper presented at the Seminar *O Mundo que o Português Criou* (Fundação Joaquim Nabuco – 500 Anos do Descobrimento do Brasil, 2000); Jorge Miguel Pedreira, *Os homens de negócio da praça de Lisboa. De Pombal ao Vintismo (1755-1822). Diferenciação, Reprodução e identificação de um grupo social* (unpublished PhD Diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1995); James C. Boyajian, *Portuguese trade in Asia under the Habsburgs, 1580-1640* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); José Gonçalves Salvador, *Os magnatas do tráfico negreiro (séculos XVI e XVII)* (São Paulo, Brazil: Pioneira Editora, 1981); David Grant Smith, *The Portuguese mercantile class of Portugal and Brazil in the 17th century: a socioeconomic study of merchants of Lisbon and Bahia, 1620-1690* (unpublished PhD Diss., Austin, Texas, 1975); *idem*, 'Old Christian merchants and the foundation of the Brazil Company', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 2 (1974), pp. 233-259.

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Portuguese Crown and the States General for their Atlantic Empires and, on the other hand, allow for the study of the relationship between the States' central institutions, the State-sponsored companies and private initiative. For Portugal, these materials are of particular interest for the study of mercantile elites. Aspects such as private investment in the Portuguese Public Debt, appointments for offices and honours, contributions to royal loans, etc. are usually identified through this set of documents.

The sources left by the State-sponsored companies give a completely different perspective on the various subjects. In the case of the Dutch, these materials reveal the goals of the WIC for the different settlements in the Atlantic. They also disclose the strategies adopted by the Board of Directors of the Company – also known as the Gentlemen Nineteen – and those followed by the Chambers. Therefore, these documents give us a glimpse into the inner functioning problems of the WIC, the problematic relationship between the Chambers themselves, between the Chambers and the Board, and between the Chambers, the Board and the Central Government in Brazil. These sources are also essential for the examination of the forms of conflict and cooperation between private, public and semi-public initiatives. Unfortunately, the sets of documents left by the Portuguese State-sponsored companies are limited in number and less rich in terms of content, which reduces the possibilities of analysis. Only few lists of shareholders and petitions to the Crown for commercial privileges as well as for exemption from religious persecution have survived.

The sources produced by the Dutch and Portuguese local governments in the West African posts and settlements give us the perspective of the men on the ground, be they the royal officials of the Portuguese Crown, the staff of the WIC or even the town governments of the Portuguese settlements controlled by the settlers. This material tells us much about the difficulties faced in the posts and settlements in administrative, military and judicial matters. It also supplies important information concerning the different social groups established in the Dutch and the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa and their social dynamics. On the other hand, the documents left by the local governments also allow for the analysis of the relationship between the different communities of Europeans, Africans and Eurafricans on the coast. Furthermore, these sources are essential for examining the relationship between the central authorities and their representatives in the West African posts and settlements.

The comparison of these source materials with the ones left by the States' central institutions or by the State-sponsored trading companies exposes the gap between local reality and the decision makers in Europe. For the Dutch, these sources bring to light the functioning problems of the WIC and the problematic relationship between the Chambers, the Board and the local governments in the settlements. For the Portuguese, a similar comparative analysis exposes the conflicts of interest between the Crown, the towns' governments and the local royal governments. The last were made up of royal officers and local settlers.

The last category of sources consists of documents left by private entrepreneurs, businessmen, and commercial agents working either on private initiative or for State-sponsored commercial companies. These materials include a wide range of notarial acts such as freight contracts, labour contracts, powers of attorney, bills of exchange, bottomries²⁶, etc. These documents give us the perspective of the mercantile groups participating in the commerce. Through their analysis, we learn about the activities of the private entrepreneurs and businessmen operating in the Atlantic in general, and West Africa in particular. Partnerships, shipping, routes, commodities as well as main areas of investment, insurance, trading practices, and strategies for spreading risks and increasing profits can be studied in detail. Based on these materials, the commercial and financial networks for the West African trade can also be reconstructed.

The comparison between these sources and the materials left by the States and by the State-sponsored companies give us an insight into the relationship between private initiative, the State and State-sponsored companies. Conflicts of interest between public and private interests as well as different forms of cooperation through the freightage of ships, recruitment of personnel, etc. are made known by the comparative examination of these source materials.

²⁶ A bottomry was a contract that combined commercial credit and insurance. See, for instance: Frank C. Spooner, *Risks at sea: Amsterdam insurance and maritime Europe, 1766-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

6. Structure

Since the main goal of this study is to identify and explain the main differences and similarities between the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic Empires, from the very beginning, our strategy has been to identify the factors of analysis that influenced the building of the empires and then select those which could be examined in a comparative perspective. Therefore, we tackle the central research question thematically by dedicating each chapter to the main themes detailed earlier.

The book is divided into two parts. In Part I, we study how the conditions in the home countries influenced the building of the empires. Here we examine the goals of the Dutch and the Portuguese States and of the mercantile elites and their strategies for the building of their empires. In order to do so, we analyse the transfer of institutions, the labour migration and the formation of colonial societies.

Chapter 1 deals with the creation of administrative, military, judicial, commercial and fiscal institutions. Here, we discuss how the establishment of certain institutions impeded or helped the Dutch and the Portuguese to achieve their main goals for the West Coast of Africa and how the functioning problems of these institutions affected the building of their Atlantic Empires.

Chapter 2 examines the patterns of the labour recruitment for and the migration to the Dutch and the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa and it discusses the impact of the home labour markets on the recruitment of personnel either in Europe or on a local level, as well as the way the Europeans perceived skilled work performed by slave workers. The influence of the home labour markets and the interests of the mercantile elites in the West African trade regarding the policies of settlement in these two empires are also under analysis.

Chapter 3 studies the local societies that took shape in the Dutch and the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa. Here, we look at three major social groups: the Europeans, Africans and Eurafricans – and we debate their role in the structuring of local societies and economies as well as their contribution in building the Atlantic system.

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Part II deals mainly with the economic strategies of the Dutch and the Portuguese in their Atlantic Empires. Here, we examine the way these two European sea powers and their private entrepreneurs organized the trade on both an international and local level, as well as the way in which they structured their commercial and business networks, our final goal being a discussion of the struggle for the control of the supply and the consumption markets in the Atlantic. Further, we debate the role of the State, the State-sponsored companies and of the private traders on the building of the Dutch and the Portuguese Atlantic system.

After introducing the reader to the concept of the ‘Atlantic system’ and the role of cooperation versus competition in the building of the Atlantic economy, Chapter 4 explores in detail the Dutch and the Portuguese intra-African trade. Firstly, we identify the coastal circuits and analyse the division between the intra- and inter-continental routes. Secondly, we examine the strategies and the reasons for this division and discuss the functions of the coastal circuits at a local, regional and international level. Thirdly, we focus on the role of inter-racial marriages and policies of settlement on the development of the coastal routes. This discussion of the role played by Eurafricans and Europeans in the coastal circuits and the supply markets is followed by an examination of how the trade was conducted both on the coast and in the hinterland. Fifthly, we debate the adjustment of Europeans to the African commercial practices. In the final part of the chapter, we explore the West African markets of supply and consumption. Here, we identify those products that were available and in demand in the different coastal areas and analyse the level of engagement of the Dutch and the Portuguese in the intra-continental trade as well as the reasons for their involvement.

Chapter 5 analyses the struggle between the Dutch and the Portuguese for the control of the inter-continental trade to and via West Africa during the 1590s and the 1670s. We examine the Dutch and the Portuguese inter-continental routes to and via West Africa and discuss the impact of the Dutch arrival on the Southern Atlantic circuits, former Portuguese grounds. In addition, we study the fluctuations of the Dutch and the Portuguese shipping to and via West Africa, paying special attention to political, economic and military matters in Europe that affected the relationship between the Republic and the Habsburg Empire and, therefore, Dutch and Portuguese Atlantic shipping. In addition, we look into the Dutch and Portuguese access and control over the supply markets of African goods. Chapter 5 is also dedicated to the examination of the African commodities traded by the

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Dutch and the Portuguese. The gold trade and the slave trade are the prime focus of our attention, since we aim to discuss the impact of the Dutch participation on the activities led by the Portuguese in the same commercial branches. Furthermore, we study how the access to the African supply markets affected the shipping of the Dutch and the Portuguese, and therefore the supply of the consumption markets. In the final part of this chapter, we seek to question the role played by the plantation complex and other economic activities in the Americas as well as in the integration of West Africa in the Dutch and Portuguese Atlantic economies.

In Chapter 6 we examine the European private entrepreneurs and businessmen based in the Republic and Portugal involved in the West African trade and acting either as partners or competitors of the monopolies held by the Portuguese Crown and the WIC. Here, the most powerful insurers and businessmen are identified and their main business interests examined. The analysis of the agents of the European merchant follows. Here, we identify the several categories of commercial agents controlling the trade in the Dutch and the Portuguese posts and settlements in West Africa. The inter-connections established between these various commercial agents are also explored. Chapter 6 also discusses the level of cross-cultural interaction between the merchants engaged in West African trade. The final part of this Chapter analyses the networks in which the insurers, merchants and commercial agents operated and debates the trans-imperial dimension of these networks by examining the commercial webs that overlapped the geographical boundaries of different European Atlantic Empires.

As a final note, it should be emphasized that this book is not simply a case study that throws light on the Dutch-Portuguese rivalries in West Africa. It offers possible explanations for the temporary success of the Dutch and the momentary decline of the Portuguese in the Atlantic of the 17th century.